

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 CU-02 SCCT-01 AID-05 SCS-03

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O R 312202Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8731

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY TEGICIGALPA

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 3042

USCINCSO FOR POLAHD

1. SUMMARY - A JULY 30 STUDENT MARCH, 500 STRONG, ENDED IN BLOOD-SHED WHEN GOVERNMENT SECURITY FORCES BLOCKED ITS PATH, OPENED FIRE WITH GAS AND BULLETS, AND KILLED AT LEAST FIVE OF THE DEMONSTRATORS. THE GOES CLAIMS ITS TROOPS WERE PROVOKED BY MOLOTOV

COCKTAILS AND BULLETS HURLED FROM AMONG THE MARCHERS. THIS APPEARS DOUBTFUL. ALTHOUGH THE HARSH NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE TO THE STUDENT MARCH CAME AS A SURPRISE AND SHOCK TO MOST OBSERVERS, THE "UNIVERSITY PROBLEM" AND THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO DEAL WITH IT EFFECTIVELY HAS BEEN SIMMERING FOR SOME TIME. THE CONFLICT WAS INTENSIFIED BY STUDENT THREATS TO DISRUPT THE RECENT MISS UNIVERSE CONTEST. THE CONSEQUENCES OF YESTERDAY'S EVENTS REMAIN TO BE SEEN.
END SUMMARY

2. THE TURMOIL THAT HAS BEEN BREWING ON THE UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR CAMPUS IN A SPORATIC, BUT PERSISTENT FASHION FOR MORE
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THAN ONE YEAR HAS FINALLY EMERGED FROM THE GENERAL POLITICAL

BACKGROUND NOISE AND LANDED ON THE FRONT PAGES WITH AN EXPLOSION. A STUDENT DEMONSTRATION ON THE AFTERNOON OF JULY 30, COMPOSED OF SOME FIVE HUNDRED UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PUBLIS, LEFT THE UES CAMPUS TO MARCH AND DEMONSTRATE THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH THE STUDENTS OF SANTA ANA, FRUSTRATED LAST WEEK IN THEIR OWN DEMONSTRATION MARCH ATTEMPTS BY GOVERNMENT THREATS AND ACTIONS. THE SAN SALVADOR MARCH ENDED THIRTY MINUTES AFTER IT BEGANN WHEN NATIONAL GUARD ANTI-RIOT TROOPS PLACED THEMSELVES ACROSS THE PATCH OF THE MARCH, WARNED THE STUDENTS TO DISPERSE, AND OPENED FIRE WITH TEARGAS AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS. ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES VARY. THIS MORNING'S PRESS CARRIED THE NAMES TWO "CONFIRMED" DEATHS, AND SIX OTHERS WHO WERE REPORTED TO HAVE DIED. POL R&A RECEIVED THE OFFICIAL MINISTRY OF DEFENSE TALLY WHICH LISTED FIVE DEAD (ALL DIFFERENT NAMES FROM THOSE IN THE PRESS), FIVE WOUNDED AND 28 ARRESTED. (THE CONFRONTATION TOOK PLACE JUST OUTSIDE A LARGE HOSPITAL COMPLEX INTO WHICH MANY OF THE INJURED WERE CARRIED. THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS TREATED HAS NOT BEEN RELEASED BY THE GOVERNMENT).

3. ALTHOUGH THE ROOTS OF THE STUDENT PROTEST MARCH AND THE GOVERNMENT'S REACTION ARE TRACEABLE TO MANY MONTHS OF SIMMERING UNIVERSITY UNREST, THE MORE IMMEDIATE CAUSES ARE ENTWINED WITH THE RECENT MISS UNIVERSE PAGEANT. WELL BEFORE THE CONTEST STARTED, STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS THREATENED TO DISRUPT THE EVENT WITH MARCHES AND OTHER FORMS OF PROTEST. THE GOVERNMENT, AS AWARE AS STUDENT POLITICAL LEADERS OF THE POTENTIAL FOR ACUTE GOES EMBARRASSMENT WHILE THE "EYES OF THE WORLD" WERE ON EL SALVADOR, RESPONDED WITH STRONG WARNINGS TO THE STUDENTS NOT TO TRY ANYTHING OF THE KIND. THE KIDNAPPING OF CHOCO DE SOLA (SAN SALVADOR 2591), AND OTHER PURPORTED "POLITICAL CRIMES" OF RECENT WEEKS, DID NOT DIMINISH THE GOVERNMENT'S EXPANDING PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT. THE GOES SECURITY PRECAUTIONS DURING THE MISS UNIVERSE ACTIVITIES WERE EXTENSIVE. THEY ALSO WERE SUCCESSFUL. THE STUDENTS REMAINED ON CAMPUS, HAVING TO CONTENT THEMSELVES WITH DAILY THREATS AND TAUNTS AT THE GOVERNMENT. THE SECURITY SERVICES WERE REPORTED BY SEVERAL SOURCES TO BE WAITING FOR THE MISS UNIVERSE SPOTLIGHT TO GO OFF SO THAT THEY COULD CLAMP DOWN ON THE STUDENT DISORDERS. DURING THIS PAST WEEK ALMOST EVERY DAY SAW THE STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS ISSUE LEAFLETS CALLING FOR A MARCH. THE GOES
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ISSUED ITS OWN FLYSHEETS, SOME DROPPED BY PLANE, WARNING PARENTS TO CONTROL THEIR CHILDREN AND THE STUDENTS TO DISASSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM THE "RADICAL AGITATORS." THE GOES ISSUED A SPECIFIC WARNING TO THE STUDENTS NOT TO ENGAGE IN "UNLAWFUL DEMONSTRATIONS" ON JULY 29.

4. AT FOUR O'CLOCK ON JULY 30, THE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ORGANIZED THEMSELVES, AND A LARGE ADMIXTURE OF 13-16 YEAR OLD SECONDARY

STUDENTS, INTO TWO COLUMNS. THE PARADE WAS UNDER THE SPONSORSHIP OF AGEUS, THE GENERAL STUDENT ASSOCIATION CONTROLLED BY COMMUNIST DOMINATED LEADERSHIP. OTHER STUDENT GROUPS, SUCH AS THE MORE RADICAL UR-19, JOINED IN. THE GROUP PASSED THE EMBASSY SOME FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER. NO POLICE ESCORT WAS IN EVIDENCE. THE MARCHERS WERE WELL BEHAVED, MOST CARRIED THEIR SCHOOL BOOKS, AND UNCHARACTERISTICALLY THEY RESISTED THE TEMPTATION TO DECORATE OUR WALLS WITH SLOGANS AND INSULTS. TEN MINUTES LATER, SOME EIGHT BLOCKS FROM THE EMBASSY, NATIONAL GUARD GROOPS AND ARMORED CARS BLOCKED THE PATH. WHAT CAUSED THE TROOPS TO OPEN FIRE IS AS YET UNKNOWN. THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ISSUED AN OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE WHICH CLAIMS THE MARCHING STUDENTS, AS WELL AS OTHERS

"PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN" IN NEARBY BUSHES, PROVOKED THE FIGHT BY HURLING MOLOTOV COCKTAILS AND OPENING FIRE WITH AUTOMATIC AND SEMIAUTOMATIC WEAPONS. CONSIDERING THE OVERWHELMING STRENGTH OF THE SECURITY FORCES (AT LEAST SIX ARMORED CARS AND ALL TROOPS WITH GAS MASKS, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS, AND RIOT EQUIPMENT LN), THE IMPROBABILITY THAT STUDENTS COINCIDENTALLY HAD HIDDEN THEMSELVES AT THIS PARTICULAR SPOT, AND THE GROUP'S PACIFIC ATTITUDE TEN MINUTES BEFORE, THE OFFICIAL COMMUNIQUE IS DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT. ONE NEWS ACCOUNT SAYS THE TROOPS BLOCKED THE PROCESSION'S FORWARD MOTION AND IMMEDIATELY BEGAN FIRING. THE FLEEING STUDENTS WERE CHASED, CLUBBED AND ARRESTED WHEN CAUGHT.

5. COMMENT - THE MOST PREVALENT REACTION AMONG SECTORS IN IMMEDIATE CONTACT WITH THE EMBASSY IS ONE OF UNCOMPREHENDING ANGER. WHY WOULD THE GOES REACT SO HARSHLY TO A STUDENT MARCH? EVEN THOSE WHO COUNSEL STRONG GOVERNMENT MEASURES TO ASSURE PUBLIC ORDER QUESTION THE WISDOM OF DELIBERATELY CREATING STUDENT MARTYRS. THE FIRST IMPRESSION IS THAT THE GOES SECURITY FORCES, CONSTANTLY IRRITATED BY STUDENT HARASSMENT DURING THE CONFIDENTIAL

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TENSE DAYS OF THE PAST TWO WEEKS, WANTING TO STAND BY THEIR REPEATED PROMISE TO CONFINE THE "UNIVERSITY PROBLEM" TO THE CAMPUS ITSELF AND FEARFUL OF APPEARING SOFT, COULD NOT RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO SHOW THE STUDENTS THEIR TOTAL POWER. THE POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTION REMAIN TO BE SEEN. A DELEGATION OF CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC DEPUTIES WERE WITH THE PARADE. HAVING WITNESSED THE BLOODY EVENTS, THEY ARE UNLIKELY TO LET THE GOVERNMENT FORGET WHAT WAS DONE IN ITS NAME. THEY AND OTHERS ARE ALREADY REMINDING US THAT IT WAS STUDENT ACTIONS, AND GOVERNMENT REACTIONS, THAT PRECIPITATED THE FALL OF PRESIDENT LEMUS IN 1960.
MOSKOWITZ

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